



Workplace Violence on the Rise for Small Businesses

A recent survey revealed one-third (34%) of small and mid-size businesses have experienced at least one incidence of workplace violence in the past three years. In addition to loss of life, workplace violence can lower employee morale, decrease retention, decrease productivity and result in lost sales and profits.

Reputational damage is also common among businesses that have experienced workplace violence. Half of the small and mid-size businesses that experienced an incident of workplace violence reported reputational harm. One-third of surveyed companies believed their business reputation would be harmed for more than 12 months if workplace violence occurred.

What Is Workplace Violence?

In this survey, workplace violence was defined as the threat of physical harm with a weapon present or the use of force resulting in a serious physical injury to employees, executives or guests.

Where Can Workplace Violence Occur?

Workplace violence can occur at any business. It may originate from employees, customers or the public. According to this survey, large companies in the East are most likely to experience incidents of workplace violence. However, the vast majority of business representatives believe workplace violence could occur anywhere:

- 91% of businesses representatives believe workplace violence can happen in any industry
- 74% of business managers believe workplace violence can occur in their own industry
- Half of the surveyed business managers think workplace violence is random

Is Workplace Violence Increasing?

COVID-19-related stress and challenges may result in a spike in workplace violence in the near future. This was a concern for 40% of survey participants. Additionally:

- Four out of 10 managers believe workplace violence is getting worse
- One-third of businesses said employees had expressed fears about workplace violence or were concerned about security
- At 34% of businesses, employees had reported feeling threatened by customers, co-workers, visitors or the public during working hours

What Can I Do?

Half of the surveyed businesses said they would terminate an employee who threatened another co-worker. Another 11% said the threat would result in suspension. Most businesses (54%) also have a response plan in place should a workplace violence incident occur. These plans are communicated to employees in the vast majority (89%) of cases. Even with careful prevention measures and response plans in place, these events can still occur at your business. The most helpful actions following a workplace violence incident were:

- Offering counseling for all directly affected parties (this includes employees, independent contractors, and customers)
- Performing a security assessment of the premises